3. Focusing on the disadvantaged and vulnerable

Widows, disabled women, those with close family members who are disabled and women living below the absolute poverty level are all particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable. They constitute a very large proportion of Afghan women, possibly even the majority, and they will be found in all situations, integrated to varying degrees into their environment. The magnitude of the problem, together with the depletion of communities' resources, will overwhelm traditional solidarity mechanisms.

Other ways must be found to ensure sustainable and adequate living conditions for these women, for example, through training, resource allocation and support services.

Disadvantaged women should be the priority target group for programmes.

4. Building on women's potential - training and education

Training of women and education of girls are obviously important if women are to develop their full potential. However, both skills-training and education must be made relevant to women's lives. Economic necessity and the shortage of a male labour force (especially in the case of female-headed households) can help overcome social and cultural restrictions on women's participation and opportunities.

For women, both skills-training and awareness-raising are required, in order to support and improve existing traditional roles and functions and to enable women to increase their involvement in non-traditional activities.

Training must be participatory to ensure that the content is relevant and the methodology appropriate.

Adequate long-term support must be provided along with training courses to ensure sustainability.

The majority of Afghan women have never had the opportunity to receive any formal education, despite the fact that education for all is strongly advocated in the Koran. Only in the government-controlled areas have female education programmes shown marked progress. Expanding education programmes for females will be successful only to the degree that they obtain local support. Lack of female education can be a major constraint to development work in other sectors.

If the formal education sector is to reach girls and women in all areas, then several integrated strategies will need to be pursued:

- ***analysing underlying attitudes toward female education***
- ***making the curriculum content relevant***
- ***improving the teaching methodology***

- *building on the village madrassa system, or a home-based schooling system for girls and women*
- *seeking acceptable alternatives to the labour contribution of girl children within the family*

5. Women in partnership with men - working with men and through men

In Afghan society, women's and men's roles are clearly defined. Changes in women's conditions must involve the men. Male leadership must be persuaded of the importance and value of women's increasing access to the resources for development; without men's support in rural areas, programmes involving women will not be able to function.

Advocacy work with men may be needed in order to ensure their understanding and support of women's programmes which contribute to family, community and national development.

Socio-cultural factors may require that men are approached and worked with separately from and not together with the women.

6. Women's networks - working within existing frameworks

Women's organizations at the national level have existed both before and after 1978. The evolution of an autonomous national organization, not linked to any political group but with ties to women throughout the country, offers promise as a long-term strategy to give a voice to Afghan women.

Formal women's groups are rare outside the towns. However, very strong women's networks do exist, based on extended family relationships. By training one woman in the community, she can spread the information to the other women who cannot be reached directly.

Informal women's networks can and should be exploited; training should always emphasize the sharing of knowledge within this network system.

These networks could form the nucleus of women's associations and perhaps later could develop into formal organizations.

7. Human resources

Older, post-menopausal women are often highly respected in their rural communities and their younger female relatives often turn to them for advice. Because of this and their increased mobility and freedom, they are key women through which to work in the community.

Only a small percentage of Afghan women have had the opportunity to receive education or training. The most educated are currently to be found in the government-controlled areas or overseas. But the number of women who have received at least some education, usually vocational or health training, in refugee villages as well as in the government areas is increasing. Other women who are now living in urban areas, or in the refugee villages in Pakistan, may have become accustomed to a relatively well-developed infrastructure. This may have altered their perceptions and expectations.

All of these women would constitute an important human resource for the whole country, as producers and practitioners, agents of social change, and also as potential trainers of other women.

8. Physical resources

Overcoming the scarcity of resources is a priority. To date, much planning has focused primarily on supply of physical resources, with men as the direct recipients.

Where suitable resources are available, supply and distribution need improvement and specific plans must be made to reach women as major recipients; for example, school construction needs to be specifically targeted to girls' schools.

Where further development of appropriate resources is necessary, for example, relevant primary school materials, women's and girls' needs must be incorporated.

Distribution of resources or inputs may also need to be linked with availability of trained personnel to explain uses of unfamiliar improved technologies.

9. Integration and coordination for development

Most development problems have multiple, interrelated causes, requiring action in different sectors. Intersectoral action is a key element of primary health care, and indeed of all development work.

Integration and coordination can greatly increase cost-effectiveness of programmes.

Intersectoral action also promotes a holistic approach at the community level, in keeping with women's lives.

Programmes should cover the spectrum of health and child care, agriculture and care of animals, labour- and energy-saving technologies, income generation and education in order to be able to respond to the priority needs of women and the community.

10. Support structures - building from the bottom up

For any programme to be sustainable, it must have effective support structures. If programmes are to be community-based and integrated, then so should the support structures.

With its rural infrastructure almost totally devastated, Afghanistan has a unique opportunity to reconstruct appropriate, integrated and culturally acceptable rural development centres with health, educational, agricultural and economic services available in one place. These should be centres for personnel, resources and training; they should in turn have adequate support through district or sub-district centres, and again as far as possible be physically integrated, for greater coordination and cost-effectiveness.

Support facilities need to be community oriented, integrated and decentralized.

In more traditional settings, buildings which allow for physical separation of the sexes are likely to be more culturally acceptable, and therefore effective and accessible to women.

11. Information gathering and utilization

Much information is available in all sectors, both in terms of data and experience. Although more is needed in some areas, lack of information is not a valid constraint to the design and implementation of effective programmes.

A comprehensive assessment should be made of existing information and this should be shared with all interested parties.

Further gender-specific information is needed for education, agriculture and micro-enterprises.

Gender-specific data collection should be incorporated into all projects.

12. Gender-specific policy and planning

While women's main involvement in agriculture, micro-enterprises, health and education is at the village and household levels, changes to improve women's situations must also be incorporated into macro-policies at national and sub-national levels, at institutions which provide resources, services and training, and into programmes and projects.

Planners and policy makers need to be sensitized to the value of women's potential for contribution to rehabilitation and development in all sectors.

Women's roles and women's issues must be clearly defined and incorporated into policies, plans and institutional changes at all levels in order to increase women's productivity and improve their health and educational status.

THE WORKSHOP

Afghanistan is on the threshold of an era of rehabilitation and development. It has experienced more than a decade of civil strife and social disruption. Women make up more than half the human resource potential for rehabilitation and development. The roles that women traditionally play in household health and nutrition, food production and other sectors have long been known. Economists have demonstrated the significant returns on investment in education for females and in extension services geared to the agricultural labour provided by women. Statisticians have demonstrated the link between female education and reduced child mortality rates. The question is not whether to invest in women in Afghan rehabilitation and development; the question is how to do it.

As a first step, UNIFEM commissioned Nancy Hatch Dupree to write a preliminary needs assessment paper on women in Afghanistan (Hatch Dupree, 1989). Subsequently, on the basis of this paper, UNIFEM, together with UNICEF, set up this workshop to examine and raise awareness of women's issues within the UN system.

Workshop objectives

The ultimate objective of the workshop was to demonstrate how development resources can be invested effectively in programmes that build and harness women's resources for family, community and national development.

UNICEF and UNIFEM deliberately chose a structured workshop process as a means of achieving concrete outputs of direct use to planners of emergency, rehabilitation and development programmes for Afghan women. A series of tasks were performed in order to reach the following objectives:

1) A comprehensive analysis of women's situations, critical problems, and actual functions and roles in four sectors: health, education, micro-enterprises/ employment and agriculture

2) Identification of critical data collection which needs to be undertaken in the short-term

3) Consensus on those priority objectives for women in Afghanistan that are feasible and that promise to make a substantial contribution to overall rehabilitation and development efforts

4) Identification of feasible strategies, programmes, modalities and institutional partners

One of the final outputs of these workshop objectives is this report, which will be distributed to participants and colleagues in the UN system, donor circles and the NGO community. It is intended to support informed planning which is sensitive to gender roles and gender differentiation.

Participants

The workshop brought together a range of women in development, Afghanistan and sectoral technical specialists, plus representatives of UN system organizations in a collaborative effort at answering some of the many outstanding questions on how to invest effectively in women's contributions to Afghan rehabilitation and development. The workshop participants are listed in Appendix 1 at the end of the report.

There was a very conscious effort on the part of the organizers to find specialists not only who came from different technical sectors but also who had diverse perspectives and experiences of Afghanistan and who held varied and sometimes opposing viewpoints.

The workshop did not seek to serve as a direct forum for Afghan women. At this initial stage, the workshop sought to sensitize international agencies to the relevant gender issues in the Afghanistan context and to explore suitable approaches for donor agency work with women.

Methodology

Workshop participants were divided into four working groups: health, education, agriculture and micro-enterprise/employment. The groups completed a series of discrete planning tasks. Collectively the groups were constantly asked to identify the linkages among sectors.

The workshop groups worked through a logical process, each step building on the previous ones in the following sequence:

1) Problem and opportunity identification

2) Multi-level analysis of causes

3) Prioritizing problems and opportunities

4) Outlining possible strategies

5) Identifying constraints on implementation

6) Identifying programme modalities (inputs, outputs, outcomes) and partners

Through the duration of the workshop, each sectoral session reported back to a plenary session and findings were discussed by all the participants in order to establish the intersectoral linkages.

GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Women have to be seen in the context in which they exist, that is, in their social relationships with men, in relation to the physical environment, and how they are affected by the war.

The situation before 1979

Afghanistan is landlocked. The Hindu Kush, an extension of the Himalayas, forms the elevated backbone of the country. The topography is a sharp contrast of high mountains with protected valleys, lowland plains and deserts. The country suffers from little rainfall and high evaporation in lowland cultivable areas. Only about 14% of the total land area is arable. The villages, scattered over the lowland areas and in the valleys between the mountains, are supported by subsistence farming with animal husbandry, or by pastoralism. In 1978, agriculture accounted for about 75% of the gross national product. The agricultural sector was the major supplier of raw materials for industry and the most important source of exportable surplus.

In 1978 about 85% of the population resided in the rural areas of Afghanistan. Of the total estimated population of 15.5 million, some 2.5 million were semi-settled or nomadic. About 15% of males above the age of five were literate, while only a few per cent of the female population had attained literacy. Some 80% of the total population older than five years had not yet had the opportunity to attend school. Medical services were scanty and unevenly distributed, covering only about 25% of the population, mostly in the urban areas. Life expectancy was about 40 years for both sexes, infant mortality around 200 per thousand live births (UNFPA,1978).

Per capita income was estimated at US$ 160, and heavily skewed in favour of a small proportion of the population (World Bank, 1981). About 70% of men and 8% of the women more than 10 years old were estimated to be economically active, obtaining a cash income (CSO, 1981). This does not, however, take into account unwaged work that women in particular undertake.

Traditional Afghan society was and is kinship and family based. Patrilinear relationships predominate, and kinship and family ties through the males are important in all aspects of life. Members of the same social group normally live in the same locality and intermarry.

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PLANNING AND AFGHAN WOMEN

Report from the workshop, 21st - 23rd August 1989

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United Nations Development Fund for Women

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Local communities have traditionally had councils composed of leaders in various fields, such as water rights or justice. The council may deal with production concerns, social welfare measures or cases of personal misfortune or general shortages. One of the men on the council would be responsible for contacts with outsiders, including Government, and for assuring links with the administrative structure of the country; he would not make decisions without the consensus of the group. Religious matters were dealt with by the mullah, who was in charge of the local mosque, religious training of children and psychological counselling of the villagers.

The family is the most important unit of the social system and prevails in the extended form. Families are closely bound together into one distinct group, which share a compound. They are headed by the oldest man, who has overall control of family affairs. Men assure the links between the home and the outside world. Women tend to lead a hidden life, but rural women have generally been free to move about the residential areas of their village because the villages are either totally kin-related or organized into kin-related sections. While women generally cover their heads, the chadri, a full-length veil with a crocheted window for the eyes, is seldom worn in the village, except possibly by the well-to-do who had been to cities and had seen the chadri as a status symbol. Women's involvement in agricultural functions made wearing of the chadri impractical.

The degree of freedom of movement also varies by region, but generally women are allowed much greater freedom after menopause. Elderly women who are highly respected within the family exercise considerable influence on the family's life.

However, the family's honour is invested in the women, and their activities are closely guarded and assessed by the entire household; the man is the manager of the woman's honour and consequently of her life. If she is involved in something considered disgraceful, he is considered to have controlled her too little, and the whole household's reputation suffers.

While women's work is focused inside the household - children's upbringing, household management and processing of food - women may participate in work activities outside the compound areas according to the need of the household. At harvest-time, the women might participate in the farm work outside the residential areas, working with men to harvest cotton, pulses, fruit and nuts. Though agricultural activities and employment are seen as the man's domain, men and women are dependent on each other. What he produces through agriculture, she processes, preserves and stores. Men would herd and shear the sheep; women spin the wool and weave the carpets while men manage the marketing. Women's handcraft skills are highly valued in the family. The degree to which women are secluded depends on men; if women are to go outside the compound for training or health care, the men must agree to it. Children participate in the adults' tasks according to gender, and from an early age children contribute to the household through their work. Caring for younger siblings, collecting brushwood and grazing animals are some of the chores often delegated to children.

In urban areas, women's activities may be restricted to household work. But the situation could be different for the well-educated women, as they might have the possibility of secondary and higher education and work outside the home. Before 1978 and since, the group of urban elite women has been growing; these women may have very different lifestyles than those of rural women, working alongside of men in professional, technical and support functions in government services and the private sector.

Major changes since 1979

When the war began in 1979, modern development measures had hardly started to gain momentum - and subsequent achievements have been severely damaged in the rural areas, with the population decimated and uprooted. More than 60% of the rural health services have been destroyed, 2,000 schools have been damaged, and more than one-third of the villages existing before the war have been demolished (UNOCA, 1988). In 1987, the total agricultural production, the life blood of the economy of the people, is estimated to have reached only 53% of the level in 1978 (SCA, 1988).

Before 1978, 85% of Afghans were engaged in agriculture; now it is estimated that this group comprises only 23%. Around 33%, some five million people, are now refugees, most of them living in the densely populated refugee "villages" of Pakistan or in shanty towns in Iran. Some 24% are urban dwellers in government-controlled towns within Afghanistan. About 9% of the population, or more than one million people, are estimated to have lost their lives, including three times as many men as women. The greatest proportion of the men killed belong to the prime working age, i.e., 20-50 years old. The deaths of Afghan men have left an estimated 700,000 widows and orphans. About 300,000 people have been maimed. Women now comprise more than half of the population and among refugees actually residing in Pakistan, adult females outnumber adult males by five to three. Marek Sliwinski classifies 11% of the Afghan population as internally displaced with no regular means of survival, but it is not clear whether these people are still rural or have become urban (Sliwinski, 1988). The figure of three million internally displaced who have sought temporary refuge inside Afghanistan is used by other sources (UNOCA,1988), but this undoubtedly includes many who are also classified as urban dwellers. More accurate figures are not available.

Kabul has swollen in 10 years, from about 900,000 in 1979 to around three million, and the Government is believed to control 23 other towns with populations over 20,000, as well as some surrounding countryside, but again no accurate information exists.

It is in Kabul and other cities controlled by the Government that significant changes in policy on women and in the situation of women have occurred. Some of the changes in women's status are described below. The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) has an explicit and positive policy on women's role in society. Changes in attitudes have been observed and a greater participation by women in education, employment and other opportunities has been achieved. Integrating the modernizing perspective of some of the urban population with the perspectives of rural and refugee populations where attitudes about women have remained static or have become restrictive is a daunting task for the rehabilitation period, which has potential for conflict.

Current position of Afghan women

One issue highlighted throughout the workshop was how the relative numbers of women in these different areas have resulted in accentuating the diversity among Afghan women. Huge differences exist in the life experiences, situations, viewpoints and expectations of these women, and this must be constantly borne in mind. In generalizing, some women will be excluded or overlooked, and these may be the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. There is also a danger of losing the individual and human perspective and of starting to talk about stereotypes, which do not really exist.

Some of the differences are obvious - ethnicity, urban/rural, nomadic/settled, educated/ uneducated. But life experience will alter women, and in the 10 years of conflict, Afghan women's lives have been dramatically altered in many ways by events that were beyond their control. While there are still women who are rural, there are now large numbers who are refugees, urban dwellers or internally displaced. Even if the women now living in different areas at some point return to their previous rural situation, they will have been affected by their experiences and life will never be the same for them. So it is useful to look more closely at the women in these different categories.

Rural women

There are rural women still living traditional lives in remote valleys in Afghanistan, part of a largely self-sufficient, subsistence agricultural system, many of whom may never have travelled outside their home areas. They may seem little affected by the conflict elsewhere in the country; they themselves may not have experienced the fighting or even the bombing, yet some have family members who have been injured, killed or disabled, while fighting in the conflict, travelling to visit relatives or to buy or sell essential commodities, or in bombing attacks. Another indirect effect of the continued conflict on women is the total absence of any development assistance to rural communities over the last 10 years; the very little aid that has entered the country during this time has largely been relief aid for the more direct war casualties. Little has helped women. Even before the conflict, Afghanistan was one of the least developed countries, with very limited services in the rural areas.

Refugee women

There are the refugee women who have been forced, often by direct physical danger from fighting or bombing in their home areas, to make the arduous journey out of their country, leaving behind their homes. Many have settled in refugee villages in Pakistan or in local towns or villages in Pakistan or Iran, and a small number have ended up farther afield, mainly in Europe or the United States. Again, many have family members who have been injured,

killed or disabled, and many women themselves have been injured, disabled or have died as a result of the conflict. Some may find their mobility severely restricted by their new environments, perhaps a densely populated refugee village which is more of a town than a village and full of strangers. Living among unrelated groups, Afghan women have been subjected to stricter behaviour codes, and most have taken to wearing the chadri. These women as refugees may have much better access to services and facilities - a health unit within the refugee village, a piped water supply or improved well, a latrine in the compound, a school for the children, income-generating activities - than was the case in their rural villages. Because of the access to the refugees in Pakistan by the international community, this group is best known and therefore often considered representative of the Afghans; yet this group has a huge geographical and ethnic bias. The position of refugees in Iran is very different, but information about them is not readily available and was consequently little considered in the workshop.

Women in government-controlled areas

Women in government-controlled areas, and particularly the urban areas, have in general had the greatest access to opportunity. One indicator is the rise in literacy rates, from an estimate of 2-3% of women literate in 1979 to an estimate of 25-30% in 1984. During this period the numbers of schools for girls and of female teachers increased markedly. Women have become more visible at the university, where they now represent more than 50% of the population. Women are also increasingly visible in government, health, teaching, and other traditional women's occupations, but also in non-traditional occupations such as construction and factory work. These opportunities exist mostly for urban women, and particularly for those allied with the PDPA or whose family situation is most open to a modern role for women.

Internally displaced women

There are the internally displaced women, those who have been forced to leave their homes but have not left their country. They may find a rural area that can support extra people, but most often they migrate to become urban dwellers. The little that is known about them suggests that they may be part of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable group within Afghan society.

Nomadic women

There are the nomadic women, who no longer appear to figure in any statistics. Their traditional migrations have been disrupted by the conflict, but what has happened to them is unclear.

Particularly disadvantaged women

Within each of these categories are women who are particularly disadvantaged, such as widows, the disabled and also those whose husband or child is disabled or chronically sick. Another very vulnerable and disadvantaged section of society are those living below the absolute poverty level, who might be found particularly among the internally displaced, nomads, the landless in rural areas and unregistered refugees. Individually, each of these disadvantaged groups does not amount to a discrete minority group. Together they may possibly constitute the majority of Afghan women who are, by internationally accepted standards, severely disadvantaged and vulnerable. Disadvantaged women are found within all situations, integrated to varying degrees into their surroundings. In Afghan society, widows would normally be integrated into the households and remarried within the previous husband's family. The poor and disabled would also be supported by the community, in keeping with Islam and the traditions of Afghan society. However, traditional mechanisms alone can no longer accommodate the rising numbers of vulnerable women.

None of this is static: women's situations and their roles are continually changing and developing. A rural woman today may become an urban dweller tomorrow, either internally displaced or as a refugee in a foreign country.

The views, needs and aspirations of these categories of women may be vastly different. The knowledge and understanding of any of these women by outsiders is limited, the more so because they see and all too often judge the women from their own cultural perspectives. For example, what an outsider sees as restriction, seclusion and lack of freedom of movement, some Afghan women may see as privacy and security, and hence freedom from worry. At the same time, other Afghan women who have had access to schooling and employment are not prepared to return to the seclusion and restriction of traditional society.

The concern of the workshop was that because access to women in Afghan society is difficult, their position and needs are being not only misunderstood, but also completely ignored. As a result, their potential contribution to the rehabilitation and development of Afghanistan is not being considered or incorporated into plans for the country.

Planned action

In view of the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989, the Geneva Accords and the possibility of reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan, the UN developed a comprehensive plan of action for 1989. Emphasis is placed on mine clearance of unsafe areas and reconstruction of the physical environment. It intends to systematically de-mine the country-side to make it inhabitable again, and to reconstruct and rehabilitate the infrastructure of Afghanistan, including repair of roads and health and educational facilities. It plans for the return of the displaced population and for providing shelter to them. Systematic rehabilitation of the agricultural production and replacement of lost agricultural technology is envisaged. Food aid to population groups in dire distress is also planned for a limited period until other means of livelihood have been developed (UNOCA, 1989).

Other issues needing attention are, however, not so visible in the plan, including issues of special assistance to disadvantaged groups and development of the female human resource base. Although special assistance programmes are planned for the disabled, widows and orphans, the resources set aside are few. Yet the size of the affected population by far exceeds what can be supported by the able-bodied population, which has already had its own meagre means exhausted by the civil strife. On a more basic level, the implications of the decimation of the adult male population on Afghan women in their reproductive and productive roles, and an identification of their needs as well as of their potential for the development process, are not taken into account.

The plan of action is of national scope and seems based on top-down visualization and assessment of needs. The people, for whom the entire programme is intended, are not made visible and it is unclear to what extent Afghans themselves have been involved in setting the goals.

THE PRESENT SITUATION: WOMEN'S ROLES

The workshop started by pointing out that while women's main involvement in agriculture, micro-enterprises, health and education is at the village and household levels, changes to improve women's situation must also be incorporated into macro-policies at national and sub-national levels, at institutions that provide resources, services and training, and into programmes and projects. If women's roles and women's issues are not clearly defined and planned for at all levels, programmes and projects cannot maximize the contribution of women.

Women's roles in agriculture

In agriculture, specific tasks may be performed either by men or women, or both.

In crop production, land preparation (ploughing/digging, harrowing and levelling) is done by men. Men plant the cereals, but both men and women may be involved in transplanting rice and planting vegetables. In crop management, both sexes may weed, but irrigation and application of fertilizers and pesticides are normally done by men. Depending on the crop, harvesting may involve both sexes, but threshing is done by men.

Processing of food is the only task which tends to be exclusively women's.

In animal husbandry (cattle and small ruminants), women are usually responsible for dairy products, while both sexes are responsible for animal products and feeding. Poultry is normally the woman's concern.

Women's roles in health

Women are the main providers of health care within their families, both to children and other family members. In feeding their families and teaching children good hygiene practices, women are key promoters of good health and nutrition. They manage minor illness themselves and recommend when referral outside the family is necessary.

Female relatives assist close family members with childbirth. Traditional birth attendants (TBAs) or "dais" within the community have a wider range of skills, particularly relating to childbirth problems, and will travel outside their own family and village when called, to assist other women with difficult births. Their services are normally rewarded by payment in kind by the family they have assisted.

In refugee villages in Pakistan, programmes have been set up to train women as community health workers. These programmes build on the existing skills and experience of TBAs and other women, and expand their roles to cover broader aspects of maternal and child care, hygiene and nutrition.

A very limited number of Afghan women are trained as health professionals (doctors, midwives, nurses and health visitors).

Women's roles and participation in education

Women are responsible for the primary socialization of children and they train both boys and girls in expected forms of behaviour. They educate girls in all household related tasks, including cooking and nutrition, cleaning and hygiene, and child care. And they train the girls in food-processing, animal care and handicrafts.

As regards formal education, women and girls participate only on a limited scale, with large regional variations; female literacy rates in government-controlled areas are 25-30%, whereas in rural areas of Afghanistan and refugee communities, they are below 5%. In government-controlled areas, 25% of eligible girls are enroled in primary schools. The ratio of girls and boys enroled is 1:2. Adult literacy programmes have been operating in government-controlled areas with more than 100,000 graduates per year, 46% of whom are estimated to be women (CSO, 1984-85). In non-government controlled areas, only a few per cent of eligible children are enroled in primary schools, and most of them are boys. Traditional education in the madrassas (Koranic schools) seems still to be working, but it is mostly confined to boys and focuses on religious education (Carter, n.d.).

Women's roles in micro enterprises and employment

A small percentage of women are self-employed in micro-enterprises or employed in public and private sectors. In the government-controlled areas, some 150 women have business licences, some 7,300 are estimated to be employed in educational and vocational institutions, 25,000 in industrial organizations (CSO, 1984-85). Information about non-government controlled areas is scanty. In the refugee communities in Pakistan, about 10% of adult women are self-employed in micro-enterprises or employed in the health or education sectors (Christensen and Wolf, 1988).

Women tend to work within certain trades and micro-enterprises, very often based in their own homes; some of such trades, like carpet-making, contribute significantly to national income. Skilled women produce handicrafts, carpets or embroidery for sale. They may work

as tailors, traditional birth attendants, herbalists, bone-setters, Koranic teachers, traders or merchants. They may produce and sell kitchen garden products, silk (sericulture), eggs, chicken, soap, cosmetics or pottery.

Women may also be employed outside the home as teachers in primary schools and at higher levels, as health professionals (doctors, midwives, nurses, health visitors, laboratory technicians, etc.), or as domestic servants. In addition, in Pakistan they may be employed by aid agencies. In government-controlled areas, they may be employed in manufacturing of modern and traditional products, social organizations, transport and communications, armed forces, banks and offices, and the Civil Service (Moghadam, 1989).

Variations in women's roles in all sectors

Women's roles in all sectors may vary according to:

- Socio-political setting
- Ethnic group and language
- Ecological area
- Income group (land size)
- Nomadic/sedentary livelihood
- Age
- Health status
- Number of dependants
- Marital status

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PROBLEMS AND CAUSES

The workshop identified a number of problems and their causes both sector-specific and of a general nature, as listed below.

Agricultural problems and underlying causes

A. Present

- Low productivity
  - reduced land under cultivation
  - poor yields
- Shortage of labour force
- Destruction of irrigation systems
- Insufficient animal power
- Decimation of livestock
- Deterioration of agricultural institutions
- Lack of access to improved inputs and technology
- Prevalence of pests

B. Future

- Possibly high degree of landlessness after repatriation of refugees
- High percentage of widows and potentially of female-headed households in charge of agricultural production without adequate support

Health problems and underlying causes

Major health problems that affect women are:

- High female fertility
- High maternal mortality
- High rate of disabilities
  - direct and indirect (i.e., women themselves and indirectly their family members)
  - physical psycho-social
- Malnutrition, particularly anaemia
- Abuse of medicines
- High level of infectious diseases

The underlying causes include:

- lack of health knowledge
- inadequacy of health services and practices
- inadequacy of water supply and sanitation

Educational problems and underlying causes

- Low enrolment of girls in primary education; low literacy rates among women
- Lack of education that is relevant to the girls' and women's daily life
- High drop-out rates
- New literates lapsing into illiteracy
- Inadequate teaching materials (quantity and quality)
- High school-related costs
- Classes are taught in the official languages (Dari, Pashto or Urdu in some refugee schools), which are not spoken by all
- In madrassas, children often learn to read and write in Koranic Arabic, before achieving literacy in their mother tongue

The underlying causes include:

- low financial allocation for education and scarcity of resources
- limited understanding of utility of female education (and if education facilities exist, boys will be given priority)
- social and economic costs of losing girls' contribution to household work
- meagre prospect of meaningful jobs for educated women

Problems in micro-enterprises and employment

- Male and female attitudes towards "proper" female activities in employment and production
- Labour market constraints
- Lack of organizational capacity
- Lack of access to raw materials, markets, credit, etc.
- Lack of child-care facilities
- Insecure working conditions

Cross-sectoral problems

Access

Access to Afghan women by outsiders and access by Afghan women to the outside world are extremely limited on many different levels. Geographically, access is limited in the rural areas by a weak infrastructure and by the very scattered nature of rural populations. But even in densely populated areas such as towns and refugees villages, access may be limited physically by custom; women may be restricted to the home or hidden by the chadri when outside the home. This reduces women's access to education and to information and knowledge to be gained outside the home. The difficulty of access to women and by women was identified during the workshop as the major constraint for work with women in all but perhaps the government-controlled, modernized areas. However, while it must be accepted as the reality of the situation for the majority of Afghan women, it is not an insurmountable obstacle to working with Afghan women. It does mean that, if assistance is to be appropriate and culturally acceptable, it must reach women primarily through women, in their homes and communities.

Education and women as mothers and producers

Very few Afghan women have had any formal education; all receive informal education and training in the home. This should not be forgotten or undervalued. One of the underlying constraints in the formal education sector is that the value and importance of education is perceived very differently by traditional rural Afghans; universal education is advocated in Islam and teachers are highly respected in society, but the value of a general secular education in a rural society is questioned, particularly for women. However, the lack of formal education and, hence, literacy reduces women's access to written materials. It also limits their access to information from beyond the home, and, hence, the possibility of making informed choices. Consequently, it may hinder development work in all sectors. Throughout the world, female literacy shows an inverse relationship to infant and child mortality; the health of the family is closely linked to the level of education of the mother.

If formal education for women is to be accepted in Afghan society, it must be appropriate for their needs as perceived by the society in which the women live. As in many countries, women's work is often centred around the home and family; their direct involvement in the cash economy may be extremely limited, although some women do engage in paid employment or produce goods for sale. But their contribution to agriculture, day-to-day subsistence and family welfare is absolutely crucial to the society in which they live.

Causes for all sectors

1) Least developed country (LDC) conditions
   - low standard of living
   - inadequate services and resources
   - inadequate infrastructure
   - inadequate communications

2) War conditions
   - mines and bombs causing destruction
   - aggravation of LDC conditions
   - psycho-social effects of war
   - disruption of family life, resources and productivity
   - lack of political stability

3) Socio-cultural factors
   - low level of education
   - gender-differentiated health and education practices
   - lack of access both of women to services and to women by services
   - lack of trained female personnel

PRIORITY STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT OF WOMEN'S CONDITIONS

There is much information currently available - from before 1979, refugee communities, mujahideen-held areas and government-controlled areas. Sources include the Government, UN agencies, NGOs and academia.

The health sector probably has the most comprehensive data available, particularly with regard to the refugee women in Pakistan. Successful projects have been developed at the community level which do effectively reach both men and women. By contrast, in education, more research and information are needed in order to find appropriate and acceptable educational programmes for girls. For agriculture and micro-enterprises, as well as education, very little gender-specific data is available. Collection of this type of data was therefore a priority for these workshop groups. Little information is available on the situation of women in Iran, or on women among nomadic and internally displaced groups.

Access to and assessment of existing information for planning and action was the main priority expressed by the health group. This principle also holds for the other sectors. Important lessons can be learned from both successes and failures in projects to date. Enough is already known to enable planners to design programmes and projects which build on this existing knowledge and experience.

Incorporation of gender-specific data collection into projects was another priority, as this allows continual evaluation and modification of projects.

There was a general consensus from the different workshop groups on many overall priority strategies.

Diversity of strategies

Given the diversity of women and their roles in the different sectors and in varied environments, a strong theme throughout the workshop was the need for a diversity of strategies for these different situations.

For any development process to have viable impact, multiple strategies are crucial. The workshop drew attention to a number of applicable strategies that should operate simultaneously, complementary and overlapping, which when combined, could tackle problems

effectively. One is the bottom-up approach focusing on the household and community, letting rehabilitation emerge from the grass-roots level. Another one is targeting assistance to those most in need. A third is starting with what exists in the community and building on that. And a fourth strategy is duplicating success, concentrating projects where positive experience is gained. A final strategy is ensuring adequate support for women's programmes both through provision of resources and facilities and through policies and plans at all levels.

Household and community approach

Women's involvement in agriculture, education, health and micro-enterprises is primarily at the household and community levels. In order to gain access to women, developing a household and community level approach was advocated strongly by all sectors. A top-down approach is unlikely ever to reach Afghan women in rural communities; nor will it allow them to be involved in planning and implementation of programmes intended for them. Community participation is essential for the success of development programmes.

In refugee villages in Pakistan, several agencies have developed successful outreach-based programmes for women, focusing on them in the context of the household and community. While these programmes have been implemented mainly in the health and income-generating sectors, they can be used as models by other sectors also; some adaptations will be required both for different sectors and for other situations. In particular, these successful models can be incorporated into plans for aid to returning refugee groups.

Focusing on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged

Policies and plans need to emphasize the importance of orienting services, training and resources (credit, extension, inputs, technology) towards the most vulnerable.

Both disabled women, and women who had disabled family members to care for, were one obvious category identified by all working groups. Widows and female-headed households were another important category. There are others, such as those below the absolute poverty level, who are not so easily identifiable but who are also among the most vulnerable; they might be found particularly among the internally displaced, nomads, unregistered refugees, those with no means of support and the landless in rural areas. The disadvantaged are not a small, discrete minority group who can be dealt with by a few special measures; the numbers are huge and may possibly even constitute the majority of Afghan women, and they are to be found in all situations as an integral part of all communities and groups. To provide adequately for them means first acknowledging the magnitude of the problem, and second, ensuring that programmes identify and focus on these women.

In Afghan society, widows would normally be integrated into the households and remarried within the previous husband's family. Both the disabled and the very poor would also normally be looked after and provided for within their extended families and communities. This is very much a part of Islam and Afghan culture. However, as the numbers of vulnerable women now have swelled so greatly and while the resources within the community have been

largely depleted by the conflict, traditional mechanisms will be overwhelmed and unable to cope. Other ways must be found to ensure sustainable living conditions for these women, for example, through training, resource allocation and adequate support services. This can best be done at the community and household levels, where these women can most easily be identified. At the same time, this would ensure that these women are not taken out of their social environment and deprived of the traditional support mechanisms that are available.

Development of women's potential - training and education

Training of women was seen as a priority in all sectors, as was primary-level education of girls. But both skills-training and education must be made relevant to women's lives.

Widening the curriculum of formal female education to include subjects oriented towards women's lives, including child care, agriculture, health and nutrition, was seen as a priority, as was vocational training programmes in trades, agriculture and health which, when possible, include functional literacy and numeracy.

Training is required both to improve women's traditional roles and skills and to expand to cover new non-traditional ones. The opportunity for women to take on functions which are not traditionally theirs may arise from economic necessity and the shortage of manpower. The magnitude of the tasks involved in rehabilitation will require women's full participation as well as that of men.

Within households and communities, there is considerable knowledge and expertise; an important basic principle of development work is to start with what already exists and build on that. It is crucial that this principle is observed.

It is important that skills-training be participatory so that women can contribute and build on their existing knowledge and expertise; this also helps to ensure that the teaching is at the right level, and gives women some control over both the content of the training and the pace at which they can most effectively learn. People learn practical skills much better by actually doing them than by just being told about them. Also an informal, participatory setting is much less intimidating to uneducated women than an unfamiliar, formal setting.

On another level, women may need to gain insight into their own situations, problems and opportunities in order to be able to make informed choices concerning relevance of any particular training for them.

Training programmes must also plan for and provide adequate, long-term follow-up and support if programmes are to be sustainable.

The majority of Afghan women have never had the opportunity to receive any formal education, despite the fact that education for all is strongly advocated in the Koran. Only in the government-controlled areas have female education programmes shown marked progress. However, it may not be acceptable to try to reproduce these programmes in other areas. Alternative approaches need to be used, as the lack of female education can be a major constraint to development work in other sectors.

If the formal education sector is to reach girls and women in all areas, then several integrated strategies will need to be pursued:

- analysing underlying attitudes to female education
- making the curriculum content relevant
- improving the teaching methodology
- building on the village madrassa system, or a home-based schooling system for girls and women
- seeking acceptable alternatives to the labour contribution of girls within the family

Women in partnership with men and advocacy work with men

Traditionally, women's and men's roles are clearly defined and the division of labour is coordinated between them. What the man produces in agriculture, the woman processes, just as her surplus produce, like handicraft items, is marketed by the man. This pattern is also applied in other areas. The degree to which the woman is observing purdah is dependent upon the man. If she is to receive education or training outside the home, his acceptance of her leaving the compound must be assured first. In a society with such a close relationship between the activities of the woman and the man, and where the woman is seen as the carrier of the family's honour, changes in the women's conditions must involve the men, to avoid one becoming more developed than the other and to prevent their relationship from being affected negatively. Consequently, if programmes are established for women, the men must be involved so that he knows what she is learning and that he will support her opportunities for obtaining further knowledge.

The need to enlist the help of supportive male leaders and to raise general awareness of the potential and importance of women's contributions to all sectors was identified as a priority for action.

When social conditions permit it, community leaders, husbands and other male kin should be sensitized about the need to organize women's groups at the village level, in order to be able to reach women more effectively with services and resources and to enhance family welfare. This could perhaps be done through building on existing informal kinship networks.

Women's networks

Formal women's groups are rare outside the towns. However, very strong women's networks do exist, based on extended family relationships. These networks can and should be exploited; training should always emphasize the sharing of knowledge within this network

system, so that by training one woman in the community - probably an older, respected, and more mobile woman, information can be spread to the younger women who cannot be reached directly.

These networks could form the nucleus of women's associations and later could perhaps develop into more formal organizations.

Human resources

Older, post-menopausal women, who have more mobility and freedom and are highly respected within their communities, were identified as key women through whom to work at the community level. These women should be encouraged to share new knowledge and skills with their female relatives, as they are already doing with their existing expertise. In the health sector, traditional birth attendants particularly should be identified and offered further training.

A large proportion of Afghan women living in urban areas inside Afghanistan and in the refugee camps in Pakistan have become accustomed to more developed services and infrastructure, like health services, water supply, sanitation programmes and educational facilities. These women now possess a different perspective and may, when returning to their home areas, have a higher level of expectation of the quality of life than those who remained in rural Afghanistan. Also in government-controlled areas, a female-oriented education policy has been operative, and many women have been enroled in education programmes. About 30% of these women are estimated to be literate, and a sizeable number have been employed by the Government, as male employees were conscripted to military service. These women would constitute an important human resource for the whole country; they may become agents of social change for those who remained in the rural areas.

Afghan women already trained at the vocational and university level were also identified as an important potential human resource. Most are currently living in urban areas or abroad. Where and when social conditions permit it, these women could be utilized to train other Afghan women to function as extension workers and trainers.

Increasing numbers of women are receiving some basic training, often in health or income generation, in refugee villages as well as government-controlled areas.

All of these women constitute an important human resource for the whole country, as producers, practitioners, agents of social change, and potentially as trainers of other women.

Institutions and programmes should develop the capacity to reach target groups, both men and women, with appropriately trained men and women field workers who can train and provide services and resources.

Local language radio programmes may provide a useful way to reach rural men and women with important information.

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PLANNING AND AFGHAN WOMEN

Report from the workshop
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UNICEF and UNIFEM
New York, N.Y., USA

Physical resources

In all workshop sectors, overcoming the scarcity of resources was seen as a priority; in some cases, suitable resources were available and the problem was one of supply and distribution both to women and to men; in other cases there was need to further develop appropriate resources. In some cases, distribution of resources or inputs also needed to be linked with availability of trained personnel to explain uses of unfamiliar, improved technologies. Whatever the cause of the scarcity of resources, needs and ways of meeting needs must be analysed from the perspective of gender.

Organizational and institutional policies and programmes need to facilitate and encourage women's access to services and resources.

In addition, agricultural credit policies should make lending without collateral possible to small farmers of both genders and to the landless, on the basis of group guarantee (based on the model of Grameen Bank in Bangladesh).

Integration of different sectors for development

Integration was seen as an important objective that could promote appropriate and cost-effective programmes.

While the workshop was split into different sectoral working groups, (health, agriculture, micro-enterprises/employment, and education), Afghan women (and men) do not categorize their life experience in this way; life is viewed holistically and not compartmentalized. To try to see issues from the perspectives of Afghan women and to make programmes relevant to women's daily lives, an integrated rather than a sectoral approach should be taken whenever possible.

Training programmes should cover the spectrum of health and child care, agriculture and care of animals, labour- and energy-saving technologies, income generation and education, involving the women themselves in deciding programme priorities.

Infrastructure and support structures

Rehabilitation or new construction of infrastructure in order to provide access and support services was a priority. Avoiding costly construction of inappropriate infrastructure with high running costs was also important. Buildings which allow physical separation of the sexes are likely to be more culturally acceptable and therefore effective.

Since reaching women requires a decentralized family and community level approach, support facilities will need to be integrated and decentralized. With the almost total devastation of the rural infrastructure, Afghanistan has a unique opportunity to reconstruct

appropriate, integrated and culturally acceptable rural development centres with health, educational, agricultural and economic services available in one place but organized to allow separation of the sexes. These should be centres for personnel, resources and training, for all sectors.

The rural or lowest level centres should in turn have adequate support services through district or sub-district centres, again wherever possible physically integrated, for greater coordination and cost-effectiveness.

Information collection and utilization

Much information is available in all sectors, in terms of both data and experience, but often this information is not easy to obtain because it is not shared; consequently, it is not used widely as it should be. In many situations, effective collection and sharing of existing information is a higher priority than gathering new data. Evaluation of successful as well as unsuccessful programmes is important, as this can prevent duplication of mistakes and failures.

In some cases, existing data needs further analysis. In all cases, the group (refugees in Pakistan or Iran, urban or rural, etc.) to which the data relates must be clearly defined. All data also needs to be gender-disaggregated so that the inputs and impact of projects on women can be fully assessed. Most of the information available relates either to the pre-1979 situation or to the refugees in Pakistan; some information is available on the situation inside the country in both the government-controlled and the mujahideen areas; very little information is available specifically about the internally displaced people, nomads or the refugees in Iran. Nonetheless, lack of information is not a valid constraint to the design and implementation of effective programmes now. Continuous collection of gender-disaggregated data should be an integral part of every programme to allow continuous evaluation and modification in the light of experience and the ever-changing situation of women.

Gender specific policy and planning

While women's main involvement in agriculture, micro-enterprises, health and education is at the village and household levels, changes to improve women's situations must also be incorporated into macro-policies at national and sub-national levels, at institutions that provide resources, services and training, and into programmes and projects.

Planners and policy makers at all levels need to be sensitized to the value of women's involvement in rehabilitation and development in all sectors, and they need to incorporate gender issues into policies and institutional changes in order to increase women's productivity and improve their health and educational status.

On a practical level, donors should include in all missions a team member or consultant with expertise in both technical and gender issues.

General constraints

The workshop identified a number of constraints which will have to be taken into account if programmes are to successfully implement strategies. Many limitations relate to the underlying causes of problems listed previously: the lack of development, the effects of war and constraints due to socio-cultural factors, especially the problems of access.

The current political situation is another major constraint on working with Afghan women. At present, it precludes any truly national policies, but even sub-national policies where they exist may not cover or even consider women. This barrier can be partially overcome if policy makers in all situations and at all levels are aware of women's issues and plan accordingly. But cessation of the conflict and stabilization of a national government represents a solution which only the Afghans themselves can achieve. Whatever the political resolution, it was assumed by workshop participants that the majority of Afghan women would return to rural situations during the process of rehabilitation. In any outcome, the problem of linkages between the Kabul Government and refugee return programmes will require attention.

In addition there will be economic, financial, geographical and ecological constraints, which the workshop attempted to take into account in considering strategies.

Finally, it was pointed out that lack of coordination among donor agencies and among programme implementers can cause significant inefficiencies.

STRATEGIES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The overall strategies for each workshop sector have been described in the previous section. Each group then worked on one or two specific strategies within their sector, to develop them into programmes and review some of the issues and modalities for implementation. Time did not allow for this section to be in any way comprehensive and the selected strategies outlined below should be seen only as illustrative examples.

Agriculture

In agriculture, two strategies were considered in more detail; first, a review and evaluation of existing implementation strategies and second, development of the human resource potential of women in agriculture through training.

Strategy I: Review and evaluation of existing strategies

Objective:
To review and evaluate strategies which are being or have been implemented to involve women in agriculture production development activities, and, on the basis of evaluation, to suggest a set of feasible and appropriate strategies for delivery systems with the main emphasis on delivering agricultural services (including monitoring, reporting, evaluation).

Target group:
NGOs, bilateral and international agencies working with Afghans in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as any other relevant resource persons.

Activities required to achieve the objectives:

- Hire a consultancy team of two-three persons comprising both women and men.
- Devise a detailed work plan for the team which includes a review of existing documentation, interviews with project staff, visits to selected project sites, and interviews with persons who work with the projects under review.

- To prioritize the most useful strategies in terms of effectiveness in reaching women with agricultural resources, these activities should be undertaken with regard to different cultural groups and with emphasis on women from poor households.

Resources required:
Human: Two-three team members, interpreters and support staff.
Physical: Transport and equipment.

Time frame:
Four months.

Strategy II: Training of rural women trainers in key agricultural information, production, processing and marketing skills

Objective:
To maximize the participation and efficiency of rural women in agricultural development.

Target group:
Older rural women (preferably widows and disabled women) or natural leaders in existing informal women's networks.

Focus/scope:
Production skills such as kitchen gardening, seedlings, poultry, forestry, small ruminants, vector control, livestock care and health, food preservation (fruits and vegetables), dairy processing.

Activities required to achieve the objective:
Utilization:
- of existing trained women power
- of existing training of trainers methodology
- of improved and appropriate technology regarding agricultural production and food preservation.

Resources required:
Human: 40 trainers in a period of six months.
Physical: Training building, facilities, equipment.
Financial: Training stipends for trainees; training materials, facilities, and equipment; salaries, benefits and transport for trainers.

Time frame:
Unlimited.

Education

Various approaches were discussed to increase the level of formal education of girls and women in rural areas in Afghanistan and in the refugee communities. While it was felt that participation of girls and women in the formal sector would be the most desired strategy, the resistance to girls' and women's education by part of the Afghan population implies that perhaps education at the household and community levels through networks of literate women could be the most effective strategy at present. It could also be an entry point for participation in the formal sector. At the same time, an evaluation of the formal and informal primary education sectors was recognized as needed with a view to overcoming obstacles.

Strategy I: Training of local education promoters

Objective:
To enhance the level of formal education of girls and women through education via local networks.

Target group:
Elderly women (mullahs' wives and network leaders).

Focus/scope:
Functional literacy and numeracy, home-economics, including child care, hygiene, nutrition, food-processing, nursing. The education promoters would be trained by existing teachers.

Activities required to achieve the objective:
Recruitment of trained teachers, utilization of appropriate teaching methods and equipment.

Resources required:
Human: Up to 50 trainers for one year.
Physical: Training premises, facilities and equipment.
Financial: Salaries for teachers, teaching materials and equipment, support costs for trainers, transport for teachers, and perhaps stipends for trainees.

Time frame:
One year with prolongation as necessary.

Strategy II: Evaluation of the formal and informal primary education sector in rural areas in Afghanistan and in refugee communities

Objectives:

a) Review of failures and successes of strategies hitherto applied to introduce primary education programmes for girls and women,

b) Exploration of systematic inclusion of girls and women in the prevailing informal education sector of the Koranic school system, or in a home-based system.

Target group:

Local authorities, political parties, shurahs, NGOs and other agencies directly involved in primary education.

Focus/scope:

Analysis of prevailing perceptions of girls' and women's education; analysis of applied curricula; analysis of Koranic education sector and design of plans to include girls and women.

Activities required to achieve the objectives:

- Utilization of mixed team of Afghan/expatriate consultants (men and women)
- Devise work plan for team, including review of project documents, consultation entities and persons, and visits to sites
- Give priority to strategies most effective in enhancing girls' and women's participation in formal primary education, in the Koranic system and in a home-based system

Resources required:

Human: Four consultants and support staff
Physical: Transport and equipment

Time frame:

Three-four months.

Health

Development of primary health care (PHC) was seen as the key overall health strategy to significantly improve the health status of Afghan women and their families.

In many countries, it is common that expensive high-tech hospitals in urban areas consume most of the country's health expenditures, while actually providing services only to a very small minority of the population, predominantly the urban elite. This was the situation

in pre-1978 Afghanistan. For donors, direct investment in a high-technology hospital produces immediate, visible results, but the fact may be ignored that these establishments often experience low performance and high operating costs.

If improving the health status of Afghan women and their families is to take precedence, then priority and concomitant funding should be allocated to PHC programmes that effectively reach both urban and rural women. Ideally there should be a network of male and female community health workers in every village and every urban community. A network of support structures would also be needed and only then should referral facilities be established. Time permitted the health working group to elaborate only one strategy.

Strategy: Health education

Objectives:

- Provide health education/awareness/advocacy.
- Improve accessibility to women in the community by increasing the number of trained Afghan women included in all levels of training programmes.
- Broaden the advocacy base and community acceptance by involving men and community leaders.
- Develop health education material for formal education channels through elementary schools and madrassas.

Target group:
Rural women and their families

Focus/scope:
Family/community level

Activities required to achieve the objectives:

a) Training of village-level workers (VLWs) in health education
   - Identify individuals with previous qualifications and skills training
   - Training of VLWs and refresher training
   - Support to VLWs: transport and supplies
   - Integrate TBAs in training as VLWs.

b) Preparation of education and advocacy material that is ethnically and linguistically appropriate.
   - Posters/silk screens
   - Audio materials
   - Picture pamphlets.

c) Provision of support services through Integrated Rural Development Centres
   - Support for VLW and TBAs
   - Distribute health education materials
   - Refresher training
   - Freeze point for vaccines; operational base for mobile teams
   - Orthopaedic devices.

Resources required:

Human: Women previously trained:

- in refugee programme in Pakistan and elsewhere
- in pre- and post-1978 training programmes in Afghanistan

Physical:

a) Use existing materials from training programmes tested in rural areas in Afghanistan and with refugees.
b) Rehabilitation/construction of integrated rural development communities.
c) Transport.

Financial:

Low running costs:

- Salaries/supplies/transport

Higher capital costs:

- Start-up-costs: assessment and planning; development of curricula and materials
- Integrated rural development centres
- Training costs
- Transport

Management:

- Decentralized
- Management training
- Initially NGOs (local/foreign), eventually integrated into government services.

Possible implementing partners:

- Donors
- NGOs
- Village/religious leaders
- Formal education system
- Health facilities
- Madrassas
- Centralized health workers mobile teams
- Village level workers
- Rural development workers
- Women's groups
- Central and regional health institutions.

Time frame:

Unlimited

Micro-enterprises and employment

In micro-enterprises and employment, the need for development of employment policies, working conditions, marketing strategies for women's products, vocational training (both to teach new skills and to upgrade existing skills), support services such as day-care facilities for children, and social counselling services, all oriented to women, were a priority.

Two specific approaches, each operating at a different level, were considered in order to increase women's involvement in small-scale enterprises and labour force participation in urban or rural Afghanistan and refugee villages. It was felt that while training is crucial in activating women's resourcefulness, data collection, needs assessment and an involvement of different partners at different levels is also important to ensure that viable projects would result.

Strategy I: Data collection/needs assessment

Objective:
To identify needs for assistance, which would then form the basis of a pilot project.

Target group:
Widows, female heads of households and disabled women.

Focus/scope:
Assessment of demand and supply situation, women's skills profile/experience, aspirations, cultural acceptability of skills, sectoral profile development, needs for training and marketing, and resources available - institutional, infrastructural and environmental. The assessment would be carried out in a way which involves the participation of women and local level authorities and community members.

Activities required to achieve the objectives:
Selection of implementing partners among central government administration, local government administration, research teams, NGO personnel, local expert groups; development of detailed work plan.

Resources required:
Human: 1-2 persons plus support staff
Physical: Transport and equipment.

Time frame:
Two months.

CONTENTS

Strategy II: Women's labour force participation

Objective:

To enhance women's participation in the labour force and raise the awareness of their conditions.

Target group:

Women working in the social service sector, public, private or cooperative organizations and in manufacturing.

Focus/scope:

Urban and rural areas of Afghanistan.

Activities required to achieve the objective:

a) Data collection at macro levels: labour laws, employment policies, policies concerning women, national development plans at micro-enterprise levels, including assessments of number of women working, safety/hygiene conditions, working hours, wages, etc., associations, services (day care), training or promoting possibilities, procedures or policies.

b) To design actions at four levels, i.e., 1) For women workers (training, including upgrading and attainment of new skills) , counselling, awareness of labour rights, etc., career development; 2) for education and training systems to ensure match between kinds of training for women and employment opportunities; 3) for the family/community/public communications to raise awareness about and promote the conditions of working women; and 4) for the employers to sensitize them to promote entry and position of women in the labour market.

c) To select implementing partners, each of which could be involved at different levels, such as: government organizations, NGOs, workers organizations, employers, shurahs, jirgas and training organizations.

Resources required to achieve the objective:

Human: A multi-disciplinary team and support staff for some years
Financial: Premises, facilities, equipment, transport, staff costs.

Time frame:

Unlimited

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APPENDIX II: Selected references

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APPENDIX III: Note on the authors

Hanne Christensen is a cultural sociologist and works as Project Leader of refugee studies at the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. She has been involved in social research on refugee issues in the developing world since 1979. She has been studying the Afghan refugee situation in Pakistan since 1982 and has done field work among the refugees. She is the author of several publications on refugees and development.

Fay Haffenden is a medical doctor, who has worked extensively in community health in Asia over the last 12 years. In 1984/5, she worked for a year in Afghanistan with Health Unlimited, a British NGO, setting up a Primary Health Care and Education Project in a mujahideen-controlled area of Zabul province. In 1987 and 1988 she worked in Pakistan with the Afghan refugees as the UNHCR Health Coordinator for Baluchistan.

INTRODUCTION

Research in the past decade has demonstrated the critical links between the situation of women and the survival and healthy development of children. In some developing countries, innovative methods of enhancing women's productive and reproductive roles have begun to be implemented. For a large number of Afghan women, however, the disruption of civil war and the insecurity of refugee status have frozen not only development efforts, but also the normal evolution of development approaches that might otherwise have taken place.

The possibility of emerging peace and stability in Afghanistan offers an opportunity to reexamine approaches to development. UNIFEM and UNICEF organized this workshop on Planning and Afghan Women to focus attention within the UN system on the roles and situation of Afghan women and on the potential for broadening decision-making to include gender analysis in development planning. The workshop deliberately brought together a varied group of individuals, knowledgeable about Afghanistan and about women's productive and reproductive roles. Their experience included knowledge of pre-1978 Afghanistan, of the refugee experience, of rural Afghanistan today and of women in areas controlled by the Government in Kabul. Their perspectives ranged from an understanding of the difficulties and isolation of refugee women, to that of the expanded access of women to education and employment in Kabul. There were deep differences of view among some of the participants, but all showed a remarkable commitment to engaging in a sustained and constructive dialogue.

The report that follows, with its practical suggestions, is a result of that dialogue. As with all reports, this one was written by individuals. It cannot and should not be taken to reflect faithfully the views of all participants. For some, there are areas of real disagreement, as, for example, on questions of secular versus religious-based education. This report cannot resolve all questions. It is a beginning and not an end. The workshop has succeeded because questions were raised, dialogues were fruitful and practical follow-up steps were pointed out.

UNICEF and UNIFEM are grateful to Susan Holcombe, the coordinator of the workshop, to the participants who contributed to a difficult process, to Debbie Sanders, Caroline Huey and Sukita Wijeyesinghe who gave critical support, and to many others in our organizations who contributed to its implementation.

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SUMMARY

Afghanistan has experienced more than a decade of civil strife and social disruption. Much of the countryside has been devastated and the rural infrastructure destroyed. Over half the population has been uprooted, moving either within the country mainly to the urban areas or outside the country, to become refugees in Pakistan or Iran.

The withdrawal of Russian troops and the Geneva Accords open the way for a resolution of the conflict and for the rehabilitation and development of Afghanistan to begin. Plans are being made to enable the international community to assist in this process.

Afghan women make up half of the human resource potential of their country. Yet they have, so far, been largely disregarded in plans for rehabilitation and development, except as passive recipients of services. This is unrealistic, not just for the women, but for the whole country and for all those who genuinely seek to help the Afghans. UNIFEM and UNICEF organized a workshop in New York in order to analyze the situation more clearly and to recommend constructive ways to ensure that women are not excluded at this crucial time, and indeed that their potential is utilized to the fullest.

The recommendations that came out of the workshop are listed below. After explaining the workshop process, the report gives background information to enable Afghan women to be seen in context. The section entitled "Strategies and implementation" details the proceedings of the workshop.

The recommendations deal first with access, which is seen as the major constraint in working with Afghan women. The key strategy for overcoming this is a community- and household-based approach, building from the bottom up. Focusing on those most in need is another key issue. The recommendations then cover the various component strategies for developing and utilizing the potential of women to the fullest, through training, working with men and within existing community structures. Issues relating to resources, both human and physical, and infrastructure and support facilities are covered next. The policy and planning strategies needed to enable women to be fully integrated into the rehabilitation and development process are covered last.

12 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Access - reaching women

Access to most rural Afghan women by outsiders and access by Afghan women to the outside world are extremely limited on several different physical and socio-cultural levels. In urban areas, and particularly for those populations that have benefited from the Kabul government policies of increased female access to schooling, employment and other opportunities, women's access is less problematic. The challenge will be to integrate the wide variation in women's status and opportunities during the process of national rehabilitation.

This major constraint in reaching and involving women in rehabilitation and development can be overcome by three interrelated strategies:

- ***reaching women primarily through other women***
- ***focusing on women in the context of their homes and communities***
- ***undertaking advocacy with men in order to gain their acceptance and support of women's programmes***

2. In rural and some urban areas, focusing at household and community levels

Because of the problems of access to women and the nature of traditional Afghan society, programmes need to focus on women in their normal settings, within the household and community.

It is only at the household and community levels that community participation and real involvement of Afghan women in programmes can occur.

A top-down approach is never likely to reach Afghan women in rural communities.

Successful outreach-based programmes for women, developed in refugee villages in Pakistan, could be adapted for other situations.